

# PEOPLE & THINGS

**EX-PREMIER DE GASPERI** had none of that flamboyance of speech and gesture which we normally associate with Mediterranean leaders. He was, in fact, almost abnormally circumspect; and his family took particular delight in a true story that dates from his Premiership.

One day, during his early morning walk up the Janiculum Hill, his plain-clothes bodyguard came up and said: "Excellency, there's a suspicious-looking character ahead. Shall we detain him till you've passed, or would you prefer to turn back?"

After a thorough review of the situation, the Prime Minister replied: "We will continue our walk, but not so fast."

## A Question of Phrase

**THE** dispute between Equity and the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet is not one on which I should venture to express an opinion; and it is, of course, in many ways an admirable thing that the Sadler's Wells Ballet should have fought through from its precarious beginnings and achieved much of the prestige, much of the solidity, and (if rumour be correct) much of the discipline of the Brigade of Guards.

And yet—particularly now that the parent company is to present a programme of Diaghilev ballets—certain veteran followers and Old Contemptsibles of English ballet may perhaps be allowed to deplore the pro-consular tone of the Sadler's Wells spokesman who asserted on Wednesday that "Sadler's Wells is an institution. There can be no comparison with conditions in independent companies."

"Institution" is a cautious, conservative, backward-looking word. If it fits what goes on in the councils of the Sadler's Wells Ballet, more's the pity. It was not, by craving the status of an institution that Diaghilev created, year after year, the ballets on which other companies are now happy to batten.

## The Smith of Smiths

**THE** recent death of Charles Albert Cingria was overshadowed by that of a greater writer, Colette. There is, however, a stubborn minority of readers for whom Cingria had a unique appeal. He was perhaps the nearest thing imaginable to a French Norman Douglas—a pre-eminently free spirit, a treasure-house of rare and unfashionable knowledge, a companion cherished in every degree of society, and a writer whose works did not fit into the normal conventions of book production but came either in pamphlet-size or in cumbersome quartos printed on brown paper and sewn up with string.

Cingria had a particular interest in England. On meeting a visitor from our shores his face would assume, more than ever, the aspect of an animated currant-bun. "You are English?" he would say. "Then of course you know Smith?"

Twenty years of such questioning had taught him that this is not, in fact, the rarest of English names. But he was convinced to

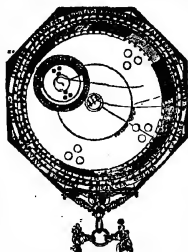
## By ATTICUS

the end that his old friend Mr. (now Sir) Matthew Smith was for every Englishman, as he was for Cingria himself, the Smith of Smiths.

## Venus Observed

**THE** coloured and movable inset is commoner now in children's books than in serious works of research. Colour, where merely decorative, would certainly be frowned on, I imagine, in the Proceedings of our learned societies.

That this was not always the case I have discovered from the delightful exhibition of books on



astronomy which is now on view at the Science Museum. One of the many curious exhibits is the "Astronomicum Caesareum of Petrus Apianus," which was published at Ingolstadt in 1540; and by courtesy of the Royal Astronomical Society, which has lent the book, I am reproducing the ready-reckoner with which the sixteenth-century armament-fancier was enabled to find the position of Mars without recourse to complicated tables. The elegance of the forms is comparable to that devised by the best watch-makers; to witness the colours—each added by hand—the enthusiast must make a personal visit to the Exhibition Road.

## More About Mescaline

**MR. ALDOUS HUXLEY'S** short study of the effect of mescaline was one of the most curious and stimulating of this year's books. During his passage through London last week Mr. Huxley was heard to say that he has explored the subject further; and that in two lectures, which he will shortly deliver in Washington and in two Carolina universities, he has examined the symbolism of Paradise in relation to the visions provoked by mescaline. Mescaline has, of course, been used as a means of achieving mystical experience; and there would seem to Mr. Huxley to be a clear correspondence between the accepted image of Paradise, with its glassy floor, precious stones, and blinding

dazzling light, and the visions recorded by those Indian mystics who are in the habit of taking mescaline. I look forward with the greatest interest to this latest manifestation of Mr. Huxley's lofty, benign, and idiosyncratic nature.

## A World Away

**IN** recent weeks my colleague Dilys Powell has described for us the idyllic and disinterested researches of the Undersea Archaeological Reconnaissance at Chios; and so vivid was her account that I found myself thinking of archaeology as one of the rare unblemished activities of modern man.

At the Etruscan necropolis of Spina, in the deserted Comacchio marshes, things are very different. Ceramics to the value of half a million sterling have recently been stolen, I hear, by knowledgeable gangs whose equipment includes war-surplus rubber rafts, frogman suits, and powerful American saloons. Official teams, with their restricted budget and normal hours of work, are naturally at a disadvantage when competing against the resourceful night-raiders; and of the 700 tombs (many dating back to the sixth century, a.c.) which it is hoped to excavate before the winter, many are likely to have been tampered with already. Meanwhile the soaked and silent marshes are the scene of strenuous activity.

## A Family Reunion

**NOT**, I believe, since the Massacre of Glencoe has there been an official gathering of the Clan Campbell. One has, however, been convened for early in September; and among those who will rally to the call of their chieftain, the Duke of Argyll, will be a large contingent of American Campbells.

The arrival of these transatlantic loyalists in Edinburgh should be a sight worth seeing, for they are to be swept northward in a procession of black limousines. At the head of the group will be a convertible, which is now being equipped with a hood of Campbell day tartan and re-upholstered in Campbell dress tartan. Those who do not recognise these illustrious designs will be apprised by a special booter of the precise nature of the expedition. When pressed, this instrument will sound the oobening bars of "The Campbells Are Coming."

September the sixth should be a day to remember in Princes Street.

## A Correction

**IN** speaking, a week or two ago, of the delicacies to be had at this year's British Food Fair at Olympia, I mentioned Zealand oysters as being prominent among them.

Further researches—prompted, I must own, by an urgent inquiry from Billingsgate—now establish that Zealand oysters will be among the few luxuries not represented at the Fair.

Grievous news! But then fish have ever been unreliable. Doubtless it is of a disappointment akin to my own that Browning was thinking when he wrote the famous line: "Never the time, and the place, and the loved one, all together."